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CARE for your FROZEN FOODS

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Convenience, top quality and good value are at your fingertips in the frozen food cabinet of your supermarket or grocery store. Only top quality foods are frozen. Movement from farm to freezer in as short a time as possible, assures homemakers of 'just picked flavor' and high nutritional value from commercially frozen foods.

SHOPPING TIPS

To ensure top quality and safety, frozen foods should be held constantly at 0°F or lower. If thawing and refreezing occur the food will lose much of its original color, flavor, texture and nutritive value.

Remember — a hard package does not assure you that the food has never thawed. To be sure you are buying the best quality frozen foods:

Shop — for your frozen foods last.

Check — the thermometer in the frozen food cabinet. Be sure it is at 0°F or less.

Choose — from a clean, well organized frozen food cabinet. Packages should not be stacked above the load line (a visible line about six inches from the top of the cabinet).

Avoid buying

- packages that show signs of frost
- torn or misshapen packages
- foods that appear dry or discolored

Ask — the wrapper to place frozen foods in insulated or double bags.

Avoid — leaving frozen foods to thaw in your car.

HANDLING TIPS

Freezing does not kill the bacteria in food, but it does prevent them from increasing in number. Once food begins to thaw, spoilage bacteria begin to multiply, especially above refrigeration temperature, (40°F). Therefore it is very important to follow thawing directions carefully to prevent spoilage. *If thawing is recommended, thaw foods in the refrigerator or under cold, running water.*

How about refreezing?

The general rule *DON'T REFREEZE* appears on most commercially frozen food packages and is still the best advice.

Thawing and refreezing of foods always results in loss of flavor, texture and nutritive value and under certain conditions the safety of the food may be affected.

If an emergency occurs and your freezer stops operating due to a power failure or mechanical problems:

Keep the freezer door closed.

Try to determine how long your freezer has been off.

If fully loaded — the food will probably stay frozen about two days.

If partially loaded — it will stay frozen about one day.

If your freezer will not be operating within one or two days, place dry ice in the freezer to keep the temperature below freezing.

You will require 25 pounds in a 10 cubic foot freezer or 50 pounds in a 20 cubic foot freezer, to hold the temperature down for 2 to 3 days if the freezer is partially full, 3 to 4 days if it is fully loaded.

OR — transfer the food to a frozen food locker until your freezer is operating properly.

Before refreezing small or large quantities of food . . . ask yourself these questions:

1. Are there any off odors or visible signs of spoilage? If so, *discard the food. But remember, spoiled food does not always have a bad odor or a poor appearance.*
2. Are there ice crystals still present in the food? If so, *you may safely refreeze.*
3. Are the foods completely thawed but still cold to touch? If so, *you may safely refreeze all foods EXCEPT COMMERCIAL FROZEN SOUPS.*
4. Was the food completely thawed and held at room temperature for less than two hours? If so, *fruits, vegetables, meats and poultry should be cooked, and may then be refrozen. Vacuum packaged food, e.g. "boil in the bag", and ice cream, sherbert and cream pies should be discarded.*
5. Was the food completely thawed and held at room temperature for an unknown period of time? If so, *discard with the exception of fruit, fruit juice concentrate and fruit pies which may be refrozen.*

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE SAFETY OF REFREEZING FOODS CHECK THE "SAFETY GUIDELINES" ON THE BACK PAGE.

CAUTION! TAKE SPECIAL CARE WITH VACUUM PACKAGED FOODS. There are a number of different types of frozen vacuum packaged foods on the market. These include "boil in the bag" vegetables and meat, seafood, poultry or meatless main dishes.

Vacuum packaged "boil in the bag" vegetables should be cooked without thawing. If they become completely thawed in the refrigerator *remove the vegetables from the package, cook and eat immediately or cook and repackage before refreezing.*

Vacuum packaged "boil in the bag" products other than vegetables, i.e. meat, seafood, poultry or meatless entrees should be cooked without thawing. If the food becomes completely thawed in the refrigerator *remove the product from the package, heat thoroughly and eat without delay. DO NOT REFREEZE THESE PRODUCTS.*

Vacuum packaged meats including smoked and cured products and cooked, luncheon-style meats are usually purchased fresh. FREEZING OF THESE MEATS IS NOT RECOMMENDED. However, if it is necessary to keep these products longer than a few days they may be frozen, as long as the vacuum package is not broken. Use within 4 weeks.

TO THAW VACUUM PACKAGED MEATS: Remove from the original package, re-wrap and thaw in the refrigerator or under cold running water. A household plastic bag or plastic film is recommended for rewinding. Once thawed use as quickly as possible.

Any vacuum packaged food product which has thawed at room temperature should be discarded.

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR REFREEZING WHEN FOOD IS:

	... A Only partially thawed (ice crystals still present)	... B Completely thawed, but still very cold to touch (45°F or about the temperature of refrigerated water)	... C Thawed and held at room temperature (68 to 72°F) for a period not exceeding two hours. Time must be known
FROZEN UNCOOKED FOODS			
Fruit, Fruit Pies, Fruit Juice Concentrates	Safe	Safe	Safe
Meat, Poultry	Safe	Safe	Do not refreeze. Cook immediately and eat OR cook and refreeze
Fish	Safe	Safe	Do not refreeze. Cook and eat
Vacuum packaged meat – lightly smoked or cured e.g. bacon, ham weiners	Safe	Safe	Do not refreeze. Cook and eat
Vegetables	Safe	Safe	Do not refreeze. Cook immediately and eat OR cook and refreeze
Vacuum packaged "boil in bag" Vegetables	Safe	Remove from package – cook and eat immediately OR remove from package, cook, repackage and refreeze	Discard
FROZEN PREPARED AND PRECOOKED FOODS			
Commercially Frozen Soups requiring no further cooking.	Safe	Discard	Discard
Homemade Soups	Safe	Safe	Do not refreeze. Heat thoroughly without delay and eat OR heat and refreeze
Ice Cream, Sherbets, Cream Pies	Safe	Safe	Discard
Meat Pies, TV Dinners, Prepared Dishes	Safe	Safe	Do not refreeze. Heat immediately and eat
Vacuum Packaged Meats e.g. Bologna, Luncheon Meats	Safe	Do not refreeze. Use as quickly as possible	Discard
Vacuum Packaged Main Dishes "boil in bag"	Safe	Do not refreeze. Heat thoroughly without delay and eat	Discard

ANY FROZEN FOOD WHICH HAS BEEN COMPLETELY THAWED AND HELD AT ROOM TEMPERATURE FOR AN UNKNOWN PERIOD OF TIME SHOULD BE DISCARDED.

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